

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-20

INFO OCT-01 ADP-00 CIAE-00 COME-00 EB-11 INR-10 LAB-06

NSAE-00 RSC-01 SIL-01 PA-03 PRS-01 USIA-15 RSR-01

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FM AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4824

C O N F I D E N T I A L SAN JOSE 2914

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: ELAB, CS

SUBJECT: ELECTRICAL WORKERS STRIKE BREWING

REF: SAN JOSE A-121 (POLITICAL BI-WEEKLY REPORT)

1. THE SECRETARY-GENERAL OF SITET, ONE OF THE THREE UNIONS WITHIN ICE, THE COSTA RICAN AUTONOMOUS INSTITUTE FOR ELECTRICITY, TOLD THE EMBASSY THAT ON AUGUST 18 A DEADLINE WILL EXPIRE WHEN ICE MUST DECIDE ON THE RE-EMPLOYMENT OF EIGHT SITET MEMBERS DISCHARGED BY ICE IN THE WAKE OF THE JUNE 20-21 STRIKE (SEE REFERENCE A-121). GUIDO NUNEZ, SITET SECRETARY-GENERAL, TOLD THE EMBASSY THAT IN ADDITION TO THE STAUNCH BACKING OF THE CCTD, THE DEMOCRATIC LABOR FEDERATION, SITET ALSO HAS THE SUPPORT OF JAPDEVA WORKERS AND THOSE EMPLOYED BY THE PACIFIC RAILWAY. HE SAYS IF A STRIKE IS CALLED BOTH THESE ORGANIZATIONS WILL WALK OUT IN SUPPORT OF SITET. TALKS ARE ALSO SAID TO BE PROSPERING BETWEEN SITET AND THE COSTA RICAN TELEPHONE, TELEGRAPH, AND POSTAL WORKERS (ACEPYT) TOWARD THEIR JOINING THE STRIKE IN SUPPORT OF SITET. NUNEZ SAYS IF A STRIKE IS CALLED, THE EFFECT, IN ADDITION TO SHUTTING DOWN ELECTRICAL POWER IN COSTA RICA, WILL BE TO PARALYZE THE PORT OF LIMON, THE RAILROADS, AND ALL PUBLIC COMMUNICATION FACILITIES. THE PTTI, WHICH IS CURRENTLY

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HOLDING A CENTRAL AMERICAN CONFERENCE IN SAN JOSE, HAS

ALSO GIVEN ITS MORAL SUPPORT TO THE SITET MEMBERS' POSITION.

2. RECOGNIZING THAT A PUBLIC EMPLOYEES STRIKE IS ILLEGAL, NUNEZ IS UNDERTAKING INTENSIVE CONTACTS WITH MANY PLN ADMINISTRATION PARTY LEADERS TO ATTEMPT TO HAVE THEM EXERT PRESSURE ON ICE TO RE-EMPLOY THE EIGHT WORKERS. HOWEVER, IF ICE DOES NOT COME AROUND, SITET IS COMMITTED TO CALL THE STRIKE REGARDLESS OF ITS ILLEGAL STATUS. NUNEZ MAINTAINS THAT DESPITE ICE'S CLAIM LAST JUNE THAT SUPERVISORY PERSONNEL COULD EASILY SUBSTITUTE FOR SITET STRIKERS, AND THUS FOIL A STRIKE, HE SAYS THAT ICE IS IN NO POSITION TO TAKE UP THE SLACK CAUSED BY SITET EMPLOYEES' ABSENCE.

3. COMMENT: THERE HAS BEEN NO MENTION IN THE PRESS OF THE SITET THREAT NOR THE IMMINENCE OF A CONFRONTATION. HOWEVER, A SITET STRIKE, COMING ON THE HEELS OF THE SUCCESSFUL POSTAL WORKERS WALKOUT, WHICH WAS CARRIED OUT IN THE FACE OF A JUDICIAL DECISION CALLING IT ILLEGAL, COULD STAND AN EVEN CHANCE OF SUCCESS. THE GOVERNMENT'S RECENT DIFFICULTIES WITH THE LABOR SECTOR AND THE ELECTION YEAR ENVIRONMENT WOULD SEEM TO ARGUE FOR ADMINISTRATION PRESSURE ON ICE FOR RESOLUTION OF SITET'S DEMANDS AND THUS AVOID THE RISKS OF THE STRIKE THREAT.
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